

A newsletter of *Victims of Abortion*

"Take courage! God has healing in store for you; so take courage" (Th. 5:10)

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Guest Writer

Angie *

My name is Angie and to say that this last year has been the hardest of my life is an understatement. There were more days than not where I woke up wanting to end it all and it if wasn't for the support of people like Anne I know I would not be here now writing this, feeling as though I have finally come out at the other side.

In November I discovered that I was pregnant. It was completely unexpected and because I had been diagnosed with a Pituitary Tumor earlier in the year, falling pregnant was unusual. I had been married just over two years and was excited about telling my husband as he expressed a strong desire to have children over the years that I had known him.

When my husband came home from work I took him out to dinner and took with me the positive pregnancy test. I wanted to surprise him. So, I slipped the test into his menu so that when he opened the menu he saw it. He seemed very excited. He had tears in his eyes and said it was probably the most important thing that can happen in somebody's life. So for 6 days we were happy and I was enjoying being fussed over.

On the seventh day however I didn't hear from him. Normally he called me in the morning from work and particularly because I was pregnant he seemed to be calling more regularly. It got to 3.00pm in the afternoon and I still hadn't heard from him so I called him. He was very short on the phone and said he couldn't talk. He pretty much hung up on me.

I sat there distraught and so called him back to tell him I didn't want him speaking to me like that. We argued and he said we would talk about it when we got home. He was a very different man when he arrived home. He started verbally abusing me telling me that I was sick and that I should get rid of the baby. He then left the house and didn't come back for a couple of days. I went to stay with a friend, as I was in shock about him telling me to get rid of our child. I stayed away for a week, and when I came back he had not changed his thought patterns.

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John 15

He said our relationship was over and I should find somewhere else to live. He then went to stay at his parent's house. For the next 3 months he kept coming over to tell me to leave and he did not once ask about how I was feeling. He threatened me in front of my friends telling me I would be a bad mother and that if I kept the baby he would take him off me. It sounds ridiculous I know, but I actually started to believe what he said. You see I was sexually abused as a child and my self esteem was very low. He was doing everything he could to make me feel unsupported and vulnerable.

He cancelled my health care, did not pay the bills and basically treated me as though I was dirt. I of course was devastated. I kept working, although I don't know how and I walked around like a zombie trying to decide whether or not to have an abortion. The idea of being a single Mum did not appeal to me at all and I was not a maternal person anyway. Something inside me knew that abortion was not the answer but that something needed to be pried out and supported. It was during this confusion that I called the pregnancy advisory line.

I was lucky enough to speak to a lovely counsellor, and I poured my heart out, sobbing most of the time. She put me on to Anne Lastman. I remember that first conversation I had with Anne. It was a Sunday night and I was distraught as I was coming along in my pregnancy and the time for an abortion was running out. As soon as she started to speak to me I felt better. It was as though she put a blanket around my shoulders and held me in her arms. She reassured me and told me she would be there for me and that I was not alone.

She then pointed out some facts that I didn't know about abortion. Facts that leave the mother often in a worse state. Anne was my saving person. From that day she kept her promise and saw me every week sometimes up to three times depending on how I was feeling. All the time she calmly reassured me, often repeating information that I just needed to hear again. She had a gift and she helped save my baby. I will thank her for the rest of my life.

I now have a beautiful boy and I love him to bits. I have learned what real love is and I have Anne to thank.

Anne don't ever stop doing what you are doing!

*Angie * (not her real name).*

Thank you darling Angie and baby. I wanted to write this story at this time of the year because it is a story of both sadness and joy. Joy at the birth of a new baby boy. Joy because the Christmas season is all about the birth of a special Baby Boy. One who changed the world. One who divided recorded time from BC to AD. It is my hope and prayer that Angie's little one is the one who will be able to divide her time from the one of sadness and hurt to one of absolute joy because he is her son.

Sexual Abuse.

The sexual abuse tyranny continues and it's important to see even from Angie's story that sexual abuse, abandonment, violence to a young person sets the path and pattern for future abuse to become possible. **Even to be abused for having such a history.** So its important in all matters of life, and that means, abortion, sexual abuse, violence, to deal with the trauma and not allow it to destroy because whilst it remains embedded within psychic fabric of the person, it has the power (in whatever way the power comes) to be triggered and to always re wound.

the restructuring of traumatic memories (I think very useful in the area of sexual abuse, abortion and abandonment, violence) is very important because if they are restructured and or remoralised these past painful events and painful memories are not seen or remembered in the light of failure and or ugliness, but in the new framework and new light of his/her survival. This is of such importance because often a sexually abused young one or a young abortive girl will look on herself as weak and "a wimp" and unable to forgive herself because of this. It is her perceived "weakness" that she fails to forgive. Further, it is of utmost importance for this (restructuring) to happen so that the rebuilding of self esteem can happen from the view point of not being weak, but of being vulnerable, rather than that of being degraded, humiliated or cowardly.

Most of my clients present with a lot of sorrow, regret, anguish, guilt, self sabotaging history, low self esteem, and from this place we begin. I hope that when this is presented I am able to help them slowly, methodically, re structure their memories by highlighting and building on their ingenuity at survival.

In my time as post abortion counsellor and sexual abuse counselling I think that I have been able to develop a certain format which I believe really works for me and for the girls that I work with. Remember, that I deal mostly with women and in the areas of abortion, multiple abortion and sexual abuse.

It's always important to help them confront the traumatic experience, but always with them knowing that this time they are not alone, I walk with them. I journey with them. I hold them if necessary and weep with them where and when it happens. We condense the trauma so that it isn't overwhelming; we speak about the trauma, as long as it is necessary, week after week as long as it takes to remove its power. I Console.

This is so hugely important. Consolation is vital because when the trauma happened and during its occurrences, there usually was no one to console. There was no one she could go to and mourn with, so that her losses were acknowledged.

Help him/her to take control of life, slowly, piecemeal, but take control. Sexual abuse trauma, and abortion trauma, robs the person (usually woman) of normal continuity of development and introduces all manner of mental health aberrations and disorders. A regaining of mastery over her life is needed

A psychological and spiritual recovery must be re commenced in order that inner terrors may be combated and all ground (irrespective of the painfulness of it) must be covered so that the sabotaged young life may be helped to begin to grow again.

Special Letter.

November 6, 2005.

I have known Mrs Anne Lastman for several years now and have come to have a high regard for her, firstly as a person of great integrity, as a very committed Catholic, and most particularly in relationship to her work in post abortion counselling.

Anne has been coming to me fairly regularly for spiritual direction and for confession, and I have also become involved in celebrating healing Masses, every so often, at our Dingley Friary for some of her clients who are suffering from post abortion trauma, or are victims of abuse or addictions. Through this contact with her clients I have begun to have an appreciation for the inestimable value of the work that Anne is doing with her clients. She sees her clients on a regular basis, and only when she and they feel that they are ready, do we celebrate these Masses.

Anne works on a shoestring budget, relying on donations from benefactors rather than charging her clients fees.

I should add that Anne is highly qualified with several university degrees, including two Masters Degrees.

For me as the retiring Custos General of the Conventual Franciscans in Australia, and also as parish priest of St Marks Catholic Church Dingley, I continue to be awed and humbled by Anne's hard work and dedication and the wise love and care she gives to her clients.

With great admiration I warmly recommend her.

*Very Rev. Fr. Gabriel Anthony Doheny OFM Conv.
Custos General.*

Thank you Fr Gabriel for the kind words. There are several reasons why I have added this letter to the newsletter. The first reason is because another professional has dealt with some of my women and it is good to hear confirmation that I actually work with the women and someone who has seen them as I have worked with them, and to tell you of the work that I do with them. Another reason is so that I can publicly thank Fr Gabriel and the Conventual Franciscan Order here in Melbourne for the immeasurable help they have given to me and my “girls”.

Fr Gabriel, Fr Victor, Br. Dominic, Br. Sebastian, Br. Pascal, Br. Jack, have helped in the preparations of the Chapel and music, flowers and incense for the Special Masses (we call these Mass of the Resurrection) and after in their attendance and friendship as we shared an agape supper.

Thank you sincerely because for the “girls” that friendship has also been important.

Another reason for the above letter is to say thank you and goodbye to Fr Gabriel who has now moved to America. Father Gabriel I will miss your patience, and kindness and clarity and your ‘being there’ when I needed to talk. Thank you. I will miss you heaps.

The Year that Was:

It really has been a richly rewarding, busy, frustrating, angst producing year

It began with me going to Perth (Jan) to see mum as she has been very very ill. The same month I went (with Gail Instance –Family Life International Aust. And Steve and Vera Mosher from Family Life International USA) to Papua New Guinea where we attended *Family Life International Symposium* in Vanimo, PNG. It was a most fantastic conference attended by Bishop Cesare Bonivento (PIME) Bishop Austin Crapp OFM, many priests, seminarians, Religious nuns, Seminary rector, Deputy Governor of Vanimo, and others. It was such a fantastic conference culminated with the reading of a letter of congratulations from His Holiness John Paul II, just two months before he passed away.

On the way back home from PNG we stopped at Cairns and Brisbane for further talks with groups and several parliamentarians and it was good to meet newsletter recipients and fit a face to names.

In late April I went for four days to New Zealand at the invitation of Colleen Bayer *Family Life International NZ*. In June I went to Brisbane at the invitation of the Guild of St Luke to participate in an abortion forum, where I actually spoke a little (as is only possible in limited time situation) on the sexual abuse multiple abortion connection.

In July, thanks to your kindness I was able to go to the World Conference on Grief in Contemporary Society, In London, and presented a workshop there. Some fruits have emerged as a result.

In the beginning of August I had to go back to Perth for three days because Mum was ill again and was asking for me. Also in late August I went to Lismore, Bellingen, Coffs Harbour, and Kingscliff for more talks at the invitation of Angela Martello and *Apostles for Life*.

On August 31, I attended another (secular) conference here in Melbourne (National Association for Loss and Grief) and here also I presented a paper on post abortion syndrome. Again it was well received and after conference several ladies talked to me privately, and one lady congratulated me on my paper on “Abortion for Foetal Abnormality and its After Effects”. She said she has used it as her main source for referencing of her assignment for studies. (yeah...I am a reference!)

September 16-18 attended *Family Life International Conference Australia* Here in Melbourne (spoke at this conference also) and on September 22 -27 attended *Family Life International Conference NZ* again both conferences as speaker.

This year we also celebrated seven Masses for completing women (with Fr Gabriel and Friars). I have attended meetings with other life groups. I have done only one radio program (sorry Ivor) and have attended four other seminars on grief for my own progressive learning.

I also attended a very special seminar on the importance of rituals in the grief process. This is something that I am very interested in because when there is an abortion; there can be no grief rituals attendant to it. This I believe is small part of the problem of the grief. Because a new story (pregnancy) has begun, some bonding has occurred, a death has resulted, but no concluding or conclusion to the story has been written. Or is acknowledged.

This year I have produced a really beautiful prayer card, which I am still trying to distribute but time has not permitted. Maybe next year. I had a fantastic vision for the card and the prayer, that is, to print a million copies and to distribute them and to encourage a million people to pray the prayer for a whole year. Imagine, a million people praying for the healing of abortion wounds. The healing of abortion wounded wombs. Imagine what could happen if “Eve’s” design was healed!

This prayer can be said by anyone, whether abortive or non abortive. It can be said by anyone for some woman who is unable to say the prayer. It can be said by males for other males who have taken their child to be aborted. I like the vision. I will try again to bring it to fruit next year.

I should have realised that it might happen, (I was slow this time!) but the prayer card created some big difficulties and I did lose two of my strong financial supporters. They didn't like the idea that children without Water Baptism are "in heaven" and that I was teaching error. For this I am sorry for the loss of their friendship and the loss of their support because without their contribution it's been really really hard financially. However, somehow or the other I continued. Thanks to those who read between the lines.

This past year I have had an opportunity to speak a few times at secular venues and to secular audiences and it was fantastic because I realised that they also need to hear and they also have a story to tell about the grief of abortion. If God permits and finances permit, I would like to continue to spread out into the secular part of society next year because within that society there are suffering women. I was touched by how many came and spoke to me after my talks and told me of their pain and these spoke from no religious belief but from deep within their feminine heart. They spoke of deep regret at the loss of "my baby."

Together with all the travel and talks I also continued with the counselling and indeed took on board many new girls and several young men. This year we also saw the birth of baby Bryce, baby William, baby Clare and please God another baby will be born in about 6 months. All because I was able to help their mothers. I hope that the Lord will look on these little ones and all the others who are born or whose mums are healed because I helped them, and perhaps have mercy on me for my own sin of abortion. I hope my two little ones in heaven will be proud of their mum.

I have prepared and sent out another year of newsletters. (1500 per issue - six issues per year). Several articles and many letters to editors some published others not.

Our family has had to endure Nick's car accident and the aftermath. Please continue your prayers for him its important. Thank you.

As I come to the end of this newsletter and year, I need to thank many of you who responded to my call throughout the year for help financially. Thank you to those that I rang personally for help and who responded. Thank you one and all. I hope I have done you proud.

I thank His Grace, Archbishop Denis Hart for the use of the premises at cheaper rent, even though I now have to leave and still do not know where to go, but I do thank him for past help, and before him H.E. Cardinal Pell who originally gave me these rooms to work from. I hope that by the time I return next year something will have worked out. Otherwise I guess I can use the front room of my home again at least temporarily.

There are many premises available but I am afraid to take out a lease in case I can't meet the repayments. I always feel vulnerable because if I write or say something that someone doesn't like then financial support might be withdrawn and I still would be

responsible for a lease. So that's where my fear stems from. I have looked and there are many offices for lease.

Finally, I need to thank the "girls" for sharing their story with you. I ask them to share them because you help to keep me doing this work and the actual telling of their story is therapeutic.

I need to again ask you to help financially, the last few calls I have made have not really been responded to, though I do say thank you hugely to those who did. Melissa thanks especially, Fr John thanks. And thanks to all the others.

Over Christmas New Year I will stop for several weeks and if God permits I will write again in early February.

For this Christmas I wish for you Joy, peace, laughter, holiness. I wish for you lots and lots of presents. And I wish for you the love and friendship of God through His Son Jesus. And to my non Catholic and non Christian supporters and friends I wish for you a restful time, also filled with peace and presents.

Please continue to pray for Melissa, Jodie, Carli, Maree, Adam, Susan, Sally, (1) Sally (2) Hamish, (lots) Andrea (1) Andrea (2) Anonie, Lisa, Catherine (new) Cindy, Tori, Jack, Julie, Tina (new), Diane, Mark, Angela, Frances, Darren, Rita, Greg, Katherine (New) Marle(new) Benjamin(new) Margaret(new) Judith (new)

May the Lord Bless and keep you



Anne Lastman.

Name _____

Address _____ P/C _____

Donation/Newsletter _____

Yes/no, I would/would not like to be on your mailing list.

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